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Reframing Artopia, One Girls Journey Through the Ins and Outs of a Large Art Organization

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Reframing Artopia,
One Girls Journey Through the Ins and Outs of a Large Art Organization
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Abstract

It was my goal to make the most of my Independent Study personally, professionally and academically. I wanted to further my skills as a teacher and supervisor while at the same time express my artistic side and get my name out into my community. I volunteered and became a committee member of a large art organization called Artopia. It comprised of local artists, arts administrators, and community activists who work together to help develop a forum to build institutional connections; linking public and private schools, universities and other organizations to create a stronger art community in the City X Metropolitan area. The organization did this by providing a forum for all local artists to convene, perform and exhibit, in the form of a large scale biennial arts festival held in historic buildings in the City X area. These events were created to help strengthening the visibility, cohesion, and marketplace of City X's arts community.

I believed strongly in the group's mission and philosophy but became extremely frustrated and disillusioned by the organizations poor leadership and lack of focus.

Based on Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal's book, *Reframing Organization, Artistry, Choice and Leadership, Third Edition* (2003) and my observations and interviews with other members of Artopia, I plan to examine what I feel are some of the reasons for the Organizations problems and what different structures or frames I would purpose if I were leader of this organization to settle conflict and help the members become more effective in reaching their goals.

All names given in the fallowing are pseudonym made up to protect the identity and privacy of the actual participants.

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Chapter One: Artopia, Bringing the City X Arts Community Together to Bring Art and Art Education to the Public

The First Impression

I moved to City X in August 2001 from New York City. I moved to City X for a teaching position at a prestigious private school. I found after I spent some time in City X that I loved my job but disliked the city. I felt it lacked a cohesive arts community. This was a big city full of culture, but at the same time, there were very few galleries or meeting places for artists of all kinds to meet and exchange ideas. The first time I became aware of Artopia (ATO), was about two years previous to my involvement with the group. In the fall of 2002 some friends of mine brought me to an art show in the southeast part of City X.

City X is separated into four sections northeast, northwest, southeast and southwest. The separation between the east and west parts of town is significant. There is a large socioeconomic and racial separation, in that the eastern part of town is very poor and predominantly African American and Latino while the western part of town is very wealthy and predominantly Caucasian.

Unfortunately because of crime, many people my age would not normally travel into southeast City X. This section of town has an infamous reputation of being very dangerous. It is filled with dilapidated and abandoned buildings. I would never have thought there would ever be an art show in this area.

To my surprise, my friends brought me to a large rundown government office building. The outside had been painted by muralists and was very colorful and inviting. A line stretched around the building, lights of all colors shimmered through the windows as music poured out the doors. The neighborhood, normally dark and quiet was alive and thriving. People were out on their front stoops watching the commotion. Children were playing in the streets out in front of the building; it was almost like a neighborhood block party. When I entered the office space, people working at the door handed me a map and list of events and asked only for a donation, whatever I could afford to give.

The space was huge. There were three floors and every inch of available wall space was filled with one artist work after another, overflowing from a multitude of gallery rooms into the hallways to the stairwells and even the bathrooms.

There was art of all kinds, small, large, watercolors, acrylics, oils, drawings, digital media, prints, murals, graffiti and sculptures, you name it, and it was there. There was art from local school children, accomplished professionals and hobbyists from all ages and cultural backgrounds.

The styles of the artwork varied from modern, abstract, surreal, realistic, to pretty much every genre imaginable. Interspersed between the visual arts, were film forums and stages for dance, theatrical, and musical performances as well as poetry readings and performance artists.

For the first time anywhere in City X, I saw all of the arts represented at once in the same place. I had no idea there were that many artists in City X. I was so impressed and amazed at the scale of the exhibition. When I found out that this event lasted for over a month I knew my friends and I would have to come back again another night to see more. Workshops and classes were held during the day and then performances at night. One full month, day and night packed with exciting activities.

I was told that the building that this function was being held in would be re-developed after the show was over and that all of the sites Artopia used for its large art events were older historic buildings. Part of the profits from the shows would go towards their restoration. I learned that Artopia worked with a large local developer that specialized in the restoration, preservation, and conversion of distressed buildings throughout the District. I thought it was fantastic to see local businesses teaming up with nonprofit community organizations in an effort to revitalize a deteriorating part of the city.

I knew then that I wanted to become involved. I wanted to show my work and participate in the next event, but unfortunately as time passed and the stresses of life progressed, I forgot about Artopia and the incredible experience I had. It wasn't until my friend came to me with an opportunity to work on the Public Relations and Marketing Committee for the 2004 Artopia show, that I remember my original experience and jumped at the opportunity to get involved and make my contribution.

In the Beginning

In the beginning I was told I would be working with thirty other artists to design thirty posters for an exhibit that would be called the "Poster a Day Campaign". As the title stated, there was supposed to be one poster for each day of the event and all were to be displayed in the entrance of the exhibition. There was also a plan to create a book featuring all the posters and advertisements created for the project.

I was really excited to meet the other artists and begin designing. Our first meeting as a group was at a local school one weeknight. The first person I met was a young man in his early thirties named Rick. Rick informed me that he was the person who organized the meeting and would be leading our group in the "Poster a Day Campaign". Rick was a painter and graphic designer who had just moved to City X from Austin, Texas where he had lead a small nonprofit arts organization.

He read about Artopia on Craig's List and thought it would be a good place to network and meet other artists, so he volunteered to help with fundraising. My first impression of Rick was that he seemed a little stiff and serious but also genuine and dedicated. I could tell he had done work like this before and would be a strong leader.

After attending a couple meetings with the Fundraising Committee (FC) Rick proposed the "Poster a Day Campaign". He explained to the committee that the posters could be used as advertisements around the city before the event. They could then be displayed in the entrance of the exhibition during the event and then sold at the end of the show along with a book that would be a collection of all the posters and advertisements. All the proceeds of the sales could go towards the next Artopia. Everyone on the FC agreed it was a strong idea so they passed it onto the Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee (SC) is comprised of local artists, arts administrators, and community activists, many of whom are the original founders of Artopia. They oversee all the committees and work done for the organization. The SC agreed with the Fundraising Committee that the "Poster a Day Campaign" would be a good business venture for the foundation.

They put Rick in charge of organizing the project and created a new committee that he would lead. The Promotional Committee (PR) as it was called, would be an off shot of the already established Public Relations and Marketing Committee (PRMC). Rick and his group would be responsible for preparing all media materials, including press releases, press packets, and advertisements, and working with media outlets to promote ATO.

Rick happily accepted the position and posted his idea for the poster campaign on Craig's List, asking for volunteers. That was how my friend Khoi got involved. He too had attended Artopia in 2002 and was also very impressed with the show.

When he saw the ad on Craig's List he eagerly volunteered. Then he talked to all his friends and got four more artists, including myself, to participate. By the first meeting we had thirteen professional designers. We were all experienced artists and new volunteers to Artopia. All of us had attended the 2002 show and we were all very enthusiastic.

Our first job was to find seventeen other artists to help out. We all posted notices on a number of Internet sites, called friends and went to local art schools and put up flyers.

Before we knew it we had twenty new volunteers. At our second meeting we had thirty-three people. The room was full of excitement. Everyone had a million ideas of what they wanted to do for their poster and the book. Our first order of business was to find a theme for the show.

We discussed a number of topics. In the 2002 Artopia, the map for building layout, artists' spaces and events was based around City X's subway. Each hallway and room was named after a different stop or station and the map given to visitors was styled after the actual City X subway map. Rick let us know that the map for the 2004 show would also have the subway theme. Many of us thought our posters should have some correlation with that idea. The problems started when everyone began brainstorming. There were many different types of artists involved, from graphic designers to painters and photographers and they were all coming at the project from different directions. There were many strong personalities and it became clear early on that it was going to be very difficult to get everyone to agree on one central theme. Each artist seemed very devoted to their own idea and those that were in the middle or not as passionate as others seemed somewhat confused, withdrawn and overwhelmed. The second meeting ended without a resolution to the problem and some heated debates where tempers flared.

At the third meeting we now had twenty-eight artists, the fights from the week before evidently scared some people off. Rick brought Carl; Carl was a member of the Steering Committee. He was a middle age man, probably in his late fifties or early sixties. He was dressed in a colorful, almost Hawaiian style shirt, Bermuda shorts and Birkenstock sandals with socks in mid fall when it was a bit cold out. He was balding at the crown of his head but that did not stop him from growing a small ponytail, more like a rat-tail from the back of his silver hair. My first impression of him was that he seemed almost like a caricature of an old hippie still living in the heyday of the 1960's counter culture. Not that I minded, I loved the vibe and values created in the sixties but as he began to speak I could tell he had perhaps over indulged in the drug culture of his time.

He began to explain that he had come to the meeting to let us know how excited the SC was about our project and how they wanted to help Rick get the ball rolling by discussing a little about what the Steering Committee was looking for in the posters, advertisements and book.

Carl was not very specific about exactly what the SC wanted; instead he spoke in generalities about City X, art and society. He talked about City X's lack of warehouse space for artists to work in and how all the reasonable priced real estate was being bought off to build luxury condominiums. He seemed to slip into a prologue about what was wrong with City X and society today.

How people had lost their passion for living and corporate American was destroying our individuality.

All interesting thoughts loosely tied to what we were there for but not a lot of help in explaining what the Steering Committee's expectations on this project were.

Rick continually had to try and help Carl stay on track and lead him back to the conversation on finding a theme for the poster project. Unable to focus, Carl continued to waste valuable group time acting more like an eager child, jumping from one random thought or story to another. Although he was a nice person and an interesting character, his antidotes, although entertaining were not helping us make any decisions.

When finally, almost an hour into the meeting, he began to talk about specific possible themes for the posters, he danced around ideas, weighing the pros and cons of every minor detail. We would discuss one topic in great length, then another and just as we would begin to come to some sort of agreement on a theme, Carl would throw out a new idea, usually in the opposite direction of whichever way we were leaning. It was almost as if he was playing devil's advocate. In the end of the third meeting no decisions were made and the group seemed more confused, divided and indecisive then before.

By the fourth meeting the group was down to twenty-three. The ineffective meetings and arguments from before caused five more volunteers to resign. The same debate began again but this time Rick came forward to organize the meeting. He had the group focus on the idea of having the posters and book correlate with the subway map design in some way and in a broader sense Artopia's goal to bring art to the City X community at large. He then summarized all the themes put forward, found what they had in common and integrated them into five main ideas we could work with. We could choose to create a poster that represented Diversity, Equality, Free Speech, Art Education or City X Art. No matter what theme we chose, we agreed the book and posters needed to relate in some way to the over all theme of the subway map.

Although these were very broad topics, it was at least something the group as a whole could agree on. We decided to design some sort of format or template everyone could place his or her designs in. That way, even if everyone worked with different themes and mediums, we could make all the posters and pages in the book have a unified appearance.

At the next meeting Rick presented several designs we could use as templates. Although there was some debate on specific design elements, the group as a whole liked his designs and agreed to use them.

We had a month to design our posters, advertisements and pages in the book. Rick and two other members of the committee worked together to create the layout for the book. Everyone completed their work on time and we were all pleased with one another's designs. Although the group had a rocky start we had finally found a rhythm and were working together well.

After we shared our designs with one another, we invited Carl to the next meeting and presented our designs to him. He in turn would take our work and give it to the Steering Committee for approval. We were told in the beginning of our project that all material had to be approved by the SC before anything could be printed or published.

At this point Carl informed the group that we would be responsible for printing our posters and book and Artopia could only cover a portion of the expense. This was a little disappointing because in the beginning of this process Carl told the group that Artopia would pay for the posters and book. We really liked our designs so we agreed to help cover part of the printing costs. Many people in the group had connections with printers in the area so we knew we would be able to print them at a reasonable price.

Carl also informed us that the SC wanted us to arrange our own spots for our advertisements for the Artopia 2004 show. This was not a problem because we had already started scouting for donated ad space in different publications in the area. One committee member had a friend that worked at the Washington Post and because Artopia is a nonprofit organization, she was able to get them to donate some ad space. We received very positive responses from many of the publications contacted and were able to arrange ad space in four of the leading local papers. All seemed to be going well, each person was contributing one service or another without any real help or guidance from Carl or the SC.

At that point we had about three months before Artopia 2004 was to open. We told Carl about the donated spaces we received and a place that would print our posters and book at a much-reduced rate. We let him know that the donated ad spaces were only good for a few days at the end of the next month. The poster and book printing would take a few weeks because a friend of Paul's, one of the designers on our committee, was going to give us a big discount but he would have to print our work in between his other jobs. Carl acknowledged all of this and told us he would get back to us as soon as possible.

We waited patiently one week after another with no word from Carl. Rick and other committee members called and e-mailed him several times in the hopes of a response so we could begin printing our posters and publishing our ads. We did not hear back from Carl for almost a month. At that point he had a few corrections the SC wanted us to make on some of the posters, ads and portions of the book.

We made the corrections quickly that week and sent them back to him, letting him know that time was running out on the donated ad space and discounted printing. We asked that he get back to us as soon as possible. We did not hear from him for almost three more weeks.

By that time we had lost the donated ad spaces in the papers and would now have to pay full price to print the book and posters because we did not have enough time for Paul's friend to print them. In fact we actually ended up paying quit a bit more then full price for everything because the show opened in three weeks and it was now a rushed job.

When Carl let us know everything was approved to send to print he also informed us that Artopia would not be able to help pay for any of the printing so the expense was left totally up to the group. At this point four more committee members dropped out totally frustrated with the process. This left eighteen of us to pay for the printing. We debated on canceling the job all together but decided we really liked our designs and thought it would be good publicity for the group. Carl also promised that when we sold the book and posters at the end of the show, we would be reimbursed for at least half of what we spent and the remaining proceeds could go towards the organization.

Chapter two: Nothing is Perfect

Preparing for the Show

We printed the book and posters and five of us took them to the 2004 Artopia (ATO) site to hang them. The site for ATO 2004 was in northeast, City X. It was an old hospital that had been converted into a school and then transformed into a children's museum. Part of the building was going to be demolished while the majority of the building would be renovated and turned into lofts and condominiums. Everything would have to be changed so the artists were given free rein in designing their spaces and the environment of the building. With donations of money and supplies from local businesses, the money earned from previous years and various artists' grants, the building would be transformed from a dilapidated mess into an art extravaganza.

When we arrived, two volunteers from the Events and Program Management Committee (EPMC) who were in charge of all installations and artists' spaces in the building greeted us at the door. Carl had instructed us to take the book and posters to the ATO 2004 site that day and hang them in the main entrance's lobby. We assumed the EPMC volunteers would be expecting us. To our dismay, they had no idea who we were. They were new volunteers who had just started the day before and were unsure of what their responsibilities were. They explained to us that they only met their committee head briefly the day before and all he told them was display spaces were based on a first come first serve basis depending on when a person or group signed up and paid their entry fee. After signing up either on the ATO website or by mail, artists were then sent a confirmation letter providing a date and time to come to the building and chose their space. The selection process started three weeks before the show would open. Each day three different times were assigned to different artists to come to the site and choose a space. The volunteers for the EPMC were told all artists wishing to select a space and set up needed to first present their confirmation letter verifying they were there at the correct time.

On the website it states that Artopia is organic; it is a non-juried or curretted show; the Steering Committee developed outreach procedures and participation guidelines to ensure the broadest possible artistic representation from the City X metropolitan area. Each participant pays a nominal fee and commits to volunteering for 15 hours. Volunteers execute every task from hauling trash and building exhibit structures to maintaining the website. The two people we were dealing with had volunteered to be a part of the EPMC and be in charge of assigning artists' spaces. Carl never mentioned any of this. We assumed because we were on a committee working on a special project for the Steering Committee, we would not need a letter to set up the poster show.

Unfortunately we were wrong. Sadly our space in the entrance of the exhibition hall had already been given away.

A middle school student, who we found out later was the daughter of one of the Steering Committee members, had come in earlier that day and hung six small paintings in an area large enough to comfortably hold all eighteen of our four foot by three foot posters.

At this point Rick called Carl to see what was going on. Carl did not know why the EPMC volunteers did not know about us. He had spoken with the head of the EPMC some time ago about reserving the entrance space for our posters. He said that it was Artopia's policy that once an artist had claimed a space and that space was approved by the EPMC, the artist could not be asked to move. Rick explained to him that this one person had only six small paintings in an extremely large space in the entrance of the building. Rather than making the person change spots, could we ask the person to move their work down a bit and let us share the space? Carl said he would have to talk this over with the other members of the SC and get back to us. He told us to sit tight at the location and he would call us right back.

We were extremely aggravated. We were asked to create the book, posters and advertisements by the SC which all of us as professional artists who get paid for our time did for free. Then because the SC took so long to get back to us about the approval for the posters and ads we lost our ad space and had to pay more than full price to print the book and posters and now they were telling us we were too late for our space. Carl promised he would get back to us in a few minutes, so we waited. While we waited we saw other artists come and take up more space. About twenty minutes later, tired of waiting, we called Carl, who still had no answers for us and told him we would find our own place. By this time much of the central locations were taken and we were forced to hang our posters and display our book in a corridor off the main lobby entrance by the bathrooms. It was not a terrible space as it was right by one of the main stages but it was not as good as the entrance we were promised.

The corridor was painted in an institutional, pea green that detracted from our work. So we decided to paint the area. The EPMC volunteers showed us a storage closet that had donated paints and brushes for the artists to use. We took some white paint and began to work. The five of us there that day painted about half the area we reserved. Other committee members promised to come and paint the rest the next day. We had a lot of white paint left over which we would need to paint the rest of our area. The EPMC volunteers told us to write our names on the paint buckets and leave it in the corner of our space and they would keep an eye on it for us. By the time the other PR members arrived the next day, the paints were gone and all the white paint in the storage closet had been used. All that was left was a Pepto-Bismol pink. So they went and bought more white paint out of their own pocket to finish the walls.

Finding My Artistic Space

The trouble we had finding a space for our book and posters made me concerned about where I would be hanging my own work. I had signed up for a space to display my artwork several months before and paid a \$60 entry fee but I had not been contacted by anyone to come and claim my area. Neither had my friend Jesse who was also on the PR Committee with me. It was ten days before the show and we decided we better contacted the Events and Program Management Committee (EPMC) to find out about our space. They informed us that we needed to contact the Performing Arts and Plastics Committee (PAPC) who were in charge of handling all the artist sign up sheets, entry fees and volunteer assignments. They were also in charge of contacting the artists when it was time to come and choose a space. So we called them.

The PAPC had no record of my sign up sheet or paid entry fee. Luckily I saved the automatic pay pal receipt from when I paid my entry fee online and with that they were able to find my form. Evidently both Jesse and I should have been contacted a couple weeks before about choosing our space and signing up for our volunteer hours but since we were lost in the system we had missed our time. They told us we should go to the site as soon as possible and choose a space but first we needed to sign up for our volunteer hours. We stated that we had already fulfilled our volunteer hours and then some working on the PR committee. The PAPC told us that our time spent on the PR committee did not count and we needed to sign up for 15 more hours to be served during the show. They handed us a volunteer sign up sheet that had a grid of dates, times, places and duties on it. There were choices such as Bartender at the Miller Station bar from 6pm to 11pm, Saturday, November 12th; Ticket taker at the Dole Circle Station, Stage one, 3pm to 8pm, Sunday November 13th; and Greeter at the Kendal station film forum 2pm to 6pm, Saturday, November 19th. Almost all the boxes had been checked off already. All that was left were clean up duties at the end of the month, very early in the morning, mid afternoon or late at night on weekdays. So we were left with the least desirable volunteer duties at the most inconvenient times for any person with a full time job.

We then had to go and find whatever space was left over to hang our work. The artist space selection process was chaotic because when an artist arrives at the site on the day and time assigned, they are given a pink and blue note card and two pieces of tape. All the artists called at that day and time stand in a line at the entrance of the building, like horses ready to be released from the gate, a whistle is blown and everyone takes off to claim a space. The goal is to find a space, tape your note cards on it before anyone else can, then write your name and the name of the area on both the blue and pink cards and have a EPMC volunteer approve it and sign your two cards. The EPMC take the cards down later and keeps them as a record to know who is placed where. In the end when you take your art down, they give you the blue card back. That way they know who has taken down their work and who hasn't.

The sit selection process reminded me a little of the race to stake a plot of land in the Free-Land Lotteries of the Western Frontier in the old pioneer days. The idea behind this was that it was supposed to give everyone an equal chance at getting a good space. The reality was that people on the Steering Committee and Events and Program Management Committee as well as any of their friends had an advantage, because they had been able to walk through the building before selection time. They are able to look at the floor plan and see where different events would be held and where the bars, food and live entertainment would be, while others were there for the first time and did not know the layout of the building.

The entire building was in terrible shape. Paint was peeling from the walls, ceiling tiles were missing, there was water dripping from leaks in the roof causing mold and mildew in some areas, producing a strong musty odor throughout the building. Many of the lights were burned out leaving much of the building dark and eerie. We were told not to scrap any of the paint or touch the ceilings because the walls were painted with lead paint and the ceilings were full of asbestos. I knew the building would be in bad shape but this building really needed major work and seemed somewhat unsafe.

By the time we got there all the good spaces were gone and it was slim pickings. We found what looked like a decent room off to the side of the main entrance on the first floor. There was a huge metal bookcase in the middle of the room but the EPMC volunteers that signed off on our room promised us that the bookcase would be removed by the time we needed to setup.

When Jesse and I returned several days later to paint and set up our display, we found the large metal bookcase, which took up the entire room, was still there. The EPMC volunteers on duty that day said that everyone was responsible for their own space and we would have to take the bookcase out ourselves. Unfortunately we found out that the bookcase must have been assembled in the room because it was far taller and wider than the doorway. We asked the EPMC volunteers if it would be all right if we took the bookcase apart to get it out of the room. They said we could because our portion of the building was going to be demolished and everything in that area would have to go anyways. So a week before the show opened, when we thought we would be able to come in and paint, we found ourselves dismantling a huge piece of furniture. We had to borrow tools from other artists setting up and even then we could not get the pieces of the bookcase apart. So in an act of desperation with the help of several other artists, we began to bang and hammer away at the bookcase until the pieces finally broke apart and we were able to carry them outside.

The EPMC volunteers told us to leave the large mangled pieces of metal in a dumpster outside that was full of dry wall, pipes, posts, paint cans and other building materials. It took us the entire day to take the bookcase apart and get it out of the room.

We returned the next day to find a note on our wall stating that we needed to speak with the head of the EPMC as soon as possible. When we tracked him down, he proceeded to scold us like school children for dismantling the bookcase and taking it out of the room. When we explained to him that we asked permission first from the EPMC volunteers on duty that day, he said they had no right to okay that and we should have known from the contract we signed when selecting our space that all furniture and structural removal needed to first be approved by the head of EPMC. Not only did he want us to pay for the bookcase, he wanted us to take the large metal pieces out of the garbage outside and take them to the dump.

I stated that I would not pay for the furniture, as I knew for a fact that my area of the building was going to be demolished and that the only way to remove the bookcase would have been to dismantle because it was built in the room. When we chose the room the EPMC members assigning spaces assured us that it would be removed before we came to paint. We never signed any sort of contract when selecting our space and the EPMC volunteers on duty the day we came and found the bookcase in the room said we could dismantle it and throw it in the dumpster outside. It was not our fault his volunteers were not aware of the proper protocol and I refused to pay or move anything and if he wanted, we could take it to court. I guess I scared him because he backed down and left it at, "Well I guess it was just a big misunderstanding, you need to sign the contract and make sure you don't take any other furniture apart", and then he left quite abruptly.

Jesse, my boyfriend Steven and I spent hours scrubbing the floors, painting the walls, washing the windows and replacing lights. Because we were late in claiming our spot, all the donated supplies were gone so we had to purchase our own. The paint was barely dry when we began hanging our work and we were left labeling our paintings as the first visitors appeared on opening day.

The Show

When we finally finished setting up our room, it looked very nice. We had decent foot traffic come thru and received a lot of compliments. I was voted one of the top ten artists to see by the City X Art News.com, a website devoted to the City X art community. They provide write-ups and reviews on gallery openings, shows, local artists and events taking place in the metropolitan area. Jesse and I both sold some of our work, which helped us pay for the paint and supplies we bought, so financially we broke even. I met cool people, made excellent connections, got my name out in the community, received good press, saw some great art and had a really good time. In the end after the whole fiasco, I could honestly say it was all worth it. Even when I had to show up late at night to clean, I met some really nice people and ended up having a good time.

The show overall was a big success.

There were over a thousand artists shown and over 50,000 visitors. For the first time Artopia was featured on all the local TV stations. It was written up in almost all the local papers and NPR, the National Broadcasting Radio Station did a special on the show. The goal was to raise \$160,000 for the costs of the show and for the City X Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CITY XCAH), which helps, promote local artists, and art organizations. For the first time in the history of the ATO shows, we exceeded our goal.

The Good, Bad and Ugly Side of Things

Although there were many positive events from Artopia 2004, there were also some negative things that occurred as well. The chaotic, inefficient method of allocating spaces and supplies caused a number of large-scale fights between artists. There were no regulations for the size or amount of work each artist could display in relation to the size of their allotted space. So some artists were left with a small area to cram their work in while others had far more space than they needed.

The map and layout of the show was confusing so it was very difficult to find your way around. Hidden corridors and tiny side rooms, not shown on the map, left many artists disconnect from the crowd. Numerous artists on higher floors or in small hidden rooms such as these, complained that not one visitor past their space the entire month. I know that during the show I saw several artists I liked but I could never find them again to show my friends.

Multiple magazines and newspapers slammed Artopia for being disorganized, messy, overwhelming and ineffective. The Washington Post's Art Critic Glenn Dixon called it "a joke, a total amateur mess. Anything worth seeing was covered or hidden behind the multitude of eyesores."

There were quite a few complaints from visitors and community leaders, that although the show was advertised as a family event, it was not appropriate for children because of pornographic art. Art such as close up photographs of different men and women's pierced genitals or photos of nude transgender individuals engaged in a number of different sex acts. Because the work was interspersed through out the building many educators and community leaders would not bring their groups to see any of the work in the show even though their were children's areas with arts and crafts activities and work.

There was a lack of volunteers for daytime workshops and art lessons. A number of schools and community organizations complained that they traveled to Artopia to attend workshops they had signed up for, only to be told once they had arrived that their workshop was canceled or the artist who was supposed to lead the workshop never showed up.

A lot of work was stolen or damaged because many artists who volunteered to stand guard or participate in clean up never fulfilled their obligation. In fact half of the posters from our "Poster a Day Campaign" were stolen. Few people found their way to our corridor unless they had to use the restroom, aside from that, we were easy to miss. Consequently we only sold two posters and the book. Sadly, in the end we had to refund the money from the two posters because they were ones that were stolen. Luckily we had chained the book to the wall. None of the artists on the PR committee were ever reimbursed for the money we spent printing the book and posters or for the paints for the walls even though the book sold for a little over \$1,200.

Problems with the buildings electrical system caused blackouts that could last several minutes to several hours. The electrical problems also caused the fire alarms to constantly go off causing the building to be totally evacuated multiple times, ruining performances and turning away visitors.

There were safety concerns about the building structurally. Some of the higher floors in the area that was going to be demolished were old and weak. Organizers as well as building inspectors were concerned about the large crowds in the building and the floors ability to support the weight. There were also concerns about fire exits and the crowds' ability to get out of the building safely if there was some sort of problem. There were a number of muggings and assaults of artists and visitors on the grounds of the show and when leaving, as well as number of cars that were broken into or vandalized. So although this was a wonderful event there were still some kinks to work out.

Chapter 3: What's Next?

A Fresh Start

I was somewhat disillusioned by my experiences with the "Poster a Day Campaign" and the 2004 ATO show but this organization stood for values I truly believed in. Regardless of all the hassles the show was a lot of fun and earned a considerable amount of money that went to the City X Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CITY XCAH). This Commission funds Artopia in part and a good portion of the money earned at ATO shows go towards City X programs.

The City X Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CITY XCAH) has developed and promoted local artists, organizations, and activities since 1968. The Mission of XCAH is to provide grants, programs and education activities that encourage diverse artistic expressions and learning opportunities so that all City X residents and visitors can experience the rich culture of the city. In partnership with the community, XCAH promotes excellence in the arts by initiating and supporting programs, activities, and policies that inspire, nurture, and reflect the multi-ethnic character and cultural diversity of the District.

Volunteers who are appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council govern the XCAH. City XCAH provides financial support and conducts programming in three primary areas:

***City X Creates,** The purpose of the City X Creates Public Art Program is to provide high quality art installations and administrative support services for the public so they can benefit from an enhanced visual environment.

*** Arts Learning and Outreach,** The purpose of the Arts Learning and Outreach Program is to provide grants, educational activities and outreach services for youth, young adults, and the general public so they can gain a deeper appreciation for the arts and enhance the overall quality of their lives.

*** Arts Building Communities** (Grants and Programs) the purpose of the Arts Building Communities program is to provide grants, performances, exhibitions, and other services to individual artists, arts organizations, and neighborhood/community groups so they can express, experience, and have access to the rich cultural diversity of the district. Grants are based on funding availability and advisory panel recommendations.

So even though I thought Carl was a flake and the Steering Committee was a mess, I was proud of the work my friends and I in Promotional Committee did and the financial contribution we were able make towards such a worth cause.

I really liked the friends I'd made on the Promotional Committee. All the challenges we faced brought us closer together and helped us grow stronger.

About eight people dropped out after the show but the rest of us agreed to stay together and continue working. We felt that despite complications, we put on a fabulous show and designed a beautiful book. Artopia was still a worthwhile endeavor and perhaps together we could help correct some of the issues we experienced.

Artopia is a Biennial event. Therefore there is a long period of time in between shows when Artopia falls off many peoples radar. My friends and I in the PR committee thought it would be nice if Artopia held more events in between the big shows to help raise money and keep the organization in the public eye. Alas, Carl continued to be our one and only liaison to the Steering Committee. Although he was a bit dimwitted, he was not a bad person. His heart was in the right place and he wanted to achieve all the same goals we did. So we decided to let bygones be bygones and start fresh.

During the down time between shows, all the Artopia committees hold meetings at the same place, in a little coffee shop and gallery called the Warehouse Café. It was owned by one of the Steering Committee members named Jerry. She was one of the original founders of Artopia. Jerry and Carl were not so much artists as art aficionados. They had both worked in politics on Capitol Hill and were recreational painters before becoming a part of Artopia. Artopia was there way to get involved and become a part of the City X arts community. Jerry also struck me as a bit of an eccentric ex-hippie. I could just imagine her and Carl in their heyday fighting injustice on the hill.

The Warehouse café was a nice place to meet because it was small, quiet and cozy and on occasion we could get free organic and or vegan muffins and scones from their bakery. The Artopia Committees would usually meet there once or twice a month depending on what they were working on. When my friends and I from the Promotional Committee began meeting at the Warehouse every other Monday, Carl introduced us to members of the Education and Community Outreach Committee (ECOC) who met there on the same nights. The ECOC was made up of three elderly retired women and two young girls in their early twenties. They like us, lost most of their members once the 2004 show was over but they also wanted to continue Artopia's work during the two years between shows. We decided to combine our committees and work together to promote ATO and continue organizing art education and outreach programs to the neighboring communities.

The Education and Community Outreach Committees responsibilities included recruiting, scheduling, and coordinating lectures, discussions and learning opportunities to be conducted by ATO artists, performers, and others for the benefit of ATO attendees.

The Education and Community Outreach Committee should also work at establishing relations with schools and other community organizations to provide guided tours and other scheduled educational opportunities specific to the needs of these organizations and their members.

Developing interdisciplinary arts education and "master classes" for artists participating in ATO. This committee can work with the Public Relations and Marketing Committee to finalize schedules for any educational presentations for the general public in time for them to be incorporated into ATO promotional materials.

With these guidelines in mind, we began planning our first big event in December of 2004. We knew it would take us some time to pull it all together so we decided to aim at holding an event around late May, early June 2005. Next door to the Warehouse Café is a place called "Next Door to the Warehouse". It is a small bar with a stage and outdoor area. Jerry owned this place as well and would often hold all different kinds of events there from small plays and theatrical troop productions, to poetry readings, performance artists and musical groups. It was a very popular place with many of my friends because a lot of up and coming Indie Rock and Alternative bands would play there. Jerry said we could hold our event there for free if we liked but the event would have to be on the last weekend in May because the place was book for different shows every weekend after that for the rest of summer and into mid October.

We were encouraged by the offer. We now had a place to hold the function and six months to plan something, which seemed like plenty of time. There were fourteen of us in the group at that point but we felt we needed more help, so we tried to recruit some new people. I was able to pull in five new friends I had made at ATO 2004 and Rick and Khoi brought in six new people as well. We now had eleven new members bring our group to twenty-five.

We started talking about what kind of event we wanted to have. People mentioned things like an art auction, a dance or concert, a film forum, art workshops and more. All of those ideas sounded great and we thought it would be fun if we could combine them all in some sort of two or three day arts festival that would showcase all the arts, like a mini-Artopia. Carl said he could put us in touch with the Performing Arts Committee and they could help us find dancers, musicians, poets and performance artists to help. So it was decided on the last weekend of May 2005 we would hold a mini-Artopia but we weren't sure what to call it.

We thought of a lot of different names and themes. Things like the ATO Carnival, styled after the one in Venice and everyone could get dressed up and wear masks. ATO Masquerade, a costume ball again with costumes and masks and we could give out a prizes for best dressed. The ATO Sock Hop and everyone could dress like they were from the fifties or the ATO Disco Inferno and everyone could dress like they were from the 70's. All the ideas seemed to center around some kind of costume party. We thought that sounded like more fun then just a regular event where people come in street clothes. We hoped that by having people dress up, it would make the event more jovial.

The most popular idea with everyone was the ATO Big Top Circus. All the artists and participants could dress up like different circus characters. We could have clowns for the kids, strong men, breaded ladies and other kooky costumes. We could decorate the warehouse like a big top circus tent and make circus posters to sell at auction. There could have games for children and adults and we could give art as prizes. The stage acts could be billed like a freak show and we were thinking of putting these crazy half human, half animal mannequin sculptures, one of the committee members made, in cages in the front windows of the Warehouse. We had it all planned out and a million ideas on what we could do.

Contributing Factors

For the first five or six meetings we were on our own with Rick in the lead as it had been before in the PR Committee. Everything was going along smoothly. The new group worked well together. We were making good progress, having productive meetings and enjoyable conversations. Rick ran a very democratic meeting. He made sure everyone had time to speak and have his or her opinions heard. He helped keep the meetings moving, curving conversations back on track when the group started to lose focus or go off on tangents. He would take everyone's concerns under consideration before making any decisions and he always found ways to settle disputes peacefully and create compromises where everyone felt included.

Problems started when Carl began attending meetings. Carl arrived after we had all agreed on the Circus theme. He had missed the meetings before when we brainstormed ideas for the theme and voted on the Circus. He wanted us to consider some other ideas. His idea was to have the theme be Prom and we could serve punch, sell corsages, decorate the Warehouse like a school auditorium, have a Prom King and Queen, make invitations that looked like yearbook pictures, so on and so forth. He was extremely excited even after we told him we had already settled on a theme and had begun planning. Carl pushed full force ahead, unwilling to listen to any further discussion on the matter. So Prom it was, like it or not. Without directly saying it, he had forcefully taken the lead of the new committee.

Carl had a much different style of leadership then Rick. Pretty much what ever he said went, even if it didn't make any sense or wasn't physically possible, as so many of Carl's ideas were. If you didn't like it you could leave and within three meetings of Carl taking the lead the majority of the group quit. We went from Twenty-five members to seven.

The only people who stayed were Rick, Jesse, Paul and myself from the PR committee and Judy, who was one of the elderly retired women from the ECOC as well as Carrel and Ann, the two young girls in their early twenties also from the ECOC.

I became so infuriated with the course things took that had I not planned to use this experience for my Independent Study in graduate school, I too would have left.

Making the Best of a Bad Situation

It was not that the Prom idea was that bad, it was just the way that it was forced on us after we had already made our decision. Because Carl was on the Steering Committee whose approval we needed to get anything done, we were in somewhat of a bind. So we began to make plans for the Prom. First order of business as usual was to find new artists. We were becoming pros at recruiting volunteers the challenge was keeping them. We found some new people on Craig's List, which was proving to be a very useful source. We had our membership up to twenty people and we renamed our group the ATO Prom Committee.

We had a few members of the Performing Arts Committee join our group and they promised to help organize performances with local music groups, DJs, poets and dancer troops. Several other members of the group volunteered to do demonstrations and art activities for adults and children on puppet making, drawing, woodcarving and silk screening. We contacted the paint company "Golden" and set up a time when one of their representative would come and demonstrate some of their new products and then give out samples as well as sell paints at a reduced rate. Other committee members volunteered to give some of their art to be sold at an auction that would be held on the last night. Two committee members were clothing designers and they volunteered to put on a fashion show and then sell some of those clothes at the auction as well. The official name for the event became "PROM Weekend with Artopia Artists, Volunteers and Their Friends". We decided that in order to fit all the activities we wanted to plan, we should make the prom a three-day event.

We went to our local papers, who we now had connections with from the "Poster a Day Campaign" and asked again if they would be willing to donate some ad space. Again they were very generous and gave us ample room to run our ads for a few days.

I had a friend on the City X city council and he was able to arrange some ad space for us through a program the city called "Open Metro" where they donate unsold ad space to local nonprofit organizations. So we would be able to put our ads in some of the cities buses, bus stops and subway stations.

Then Rick and Carl had a great idea for the graphic artists in the group to design T-shirts, posters and stickers to be sold at the event with the proceeds going towards Artopia 2006. Because there were only five graphic designers on the Prom Committee, we again went to Craig's List to find more volunteers. We got another fifteen people to participate making the total number of volunteers forty people, the largest committee yet.

Things were looking up. We were excited and enthusiastic again and although Carl carried the title of committee head, everyone knew to go to Rick if they really needed any help. We planned to charge \$6 at the door for the evening events such as the fashion show, Poets Café, and music performances but that wouldn't help us print the posters, stickers and T-shirts before the show.

One Thing Lead to Another

The next step was to find a way to pay for the production of the T-shirts, posters and stickers. I began talking to local businesses about sponsorship for the fundraiser. I spoke with several art and clothing companies about donations or sponsorships and we were able to make a deal with American Apparel to get 500 T-shirts for \$2,000.

Another members of the Prom Committee ran a small silk screening business out of his home. He would be one of the people giving demonstrations during one of the workshop days. He was willing to do two color printing for all 500 shirts for only \$4 each. There would be 25 T-shirts per artist and 20 different T-shirt designs total. We planned to sell the shirts for \$35 each and featured them in the fashion show.

We also made a deal with a local printer to get six thousand posters and stickers printed for \$800. I didn't think we needed that many posters and stickers but Rick thought that even if we weren't able to sell them all at the Prom we could sell the rest at the next ATO 2006 show or any other events we would put on across the next two years. He also pointed out that we were getting a very good deal because it would have cost \$650 for two thousand, and we were getting four thousand more for \$150. We were planning to sell the poster for \$10 and the stickers for \$2. The designers would get one T-shirt, 100 posters and 100 stickers of their designs. So all together we would need to raise \$5,000 to make the T-shirts, posters and stickers. Carl and the Steering Committee pledged \$2,000 from money made at the 2004 ATO show. So we really only needed to raise \$3,000.

At first we thought maybe each artist could be responsible for getting \$400 in sponsorship in order to print his or her design and help with funding this endeavor. That idea did not go over well at all. Most of the designers only wanted to contribute their time and designs. Then Carl had an idea. Perhaps we could make some sort of yearbook that featured Artopia artists and we could sell ad space in the back.

Chapter 4: Unrealistic Expectations

The Beginning of the End

This Prom seemed to be becoming more complicated every meeting. Once Carl got this Yearbook idea in his head, he really started to run with it, adding more things to it every time he talked about it. It went from a small zine production to a four-color hardbound book. Evidently the Steering Committee loved the idea as well because suddenly the focus went from planning the Prom to creating this book. They even took away the \$2,000 they had pledge towards the T- shirts, posters and stickers project and put it towards the Yearbook.

The Yearbook project was a huge source of contention amongst the group. Some people felt it took away from planning the Prom while others thought it was a good idea and would be a fun addition. I did not particularly care for the idea and I was upset that they had taken away the money for the T-shirts, posters and stickers project but I volunteered to help anyways. I wanted to learn more about print layout and Paul promised he would help me learn Adobe InDesign, which was a new layout program that was supposed to be much better then most others on the market. Many art schools, graphic design firms and printing companies were switching over to it so I thought it would be a valuable program to learn. I also thought it would be a good experience to add to my Independent Study. Paul worked for a big design firm in City X and did book layout all the time. He was sure we could design and layout the yearbook fairly quickly and it would be a nice project to add to his portfolio. Jesse, Rick, Carrel and Ann agreed to help as well because they thought it might be a fun challenge to solve and they also felt it would be a good project to add to their credits.

Since no one else in the Prom committee was interested in helping we formed a new group and called ourselves the Yearbook Committee. We planned to continue helping with the Prom and work on the book on the side. I must admit though, I was a little worried we were over extending ourselves, trying to do too many things at once but with almost forty members working on the Prom and T-shirts projects, I thought we could pull it off. At that point we still had five months, which seemed like enough time.

The Steering Committee's wanted the book to be designed like a traditional high school yearbook. They wanted the book to show all the artists of the 2004 ATO show, with individual pictures of each artist with a photo of one of their pieces of art and contact information along side. Carl brought in Gina and Liz to work on the newly founded Yearbook committee with us. They had unofficially document the 2004 Artopia show, taking a number of pictures of the events and artists. When the Steering Committee approved the idea, they told us they had all the information we would need to make the yearbook happen.

In truth, Gina and Liz did take about 300 pictures of the artists'.

The only problem with that was they accidentally got the names mixed up so even though we had many of the artist's photos we did not know who was who.

We had the e-mail address for almost all the one thousand artists that participated at ATO 2004 so the Steering Committee sent out a mass e-mail to everyone letting them know about the Yearbook project and inviting those interested to come to the Warehouse Café and have their pictures taken. They could also bring their art to be scanned or photographed.

After a dismal turn out for that, the Steering Committee sent out e-mails to everyone letting them know they could e-mail their photos, art and contact information to Paul. Only ninety-five people mailed in any photos of their work and about twelve people came in to have their photos taken at the Warehouse on the photo weekend. Everyone photos were different sizes and formats. They would all have to be photoshopped and reformatted.

Even if we could get all 1,000 artist pictures and art the size of the book would be considerable. The Steering Committee was hoping to print 2,000 copies, so I guess everybody and their brother from Artopia 2004 could get one. They wanted to include a brief history of Artopia and have large photomontages and essays from people in every Committee. Paul's original design for the layout, that Carl and the Steering Committee loved, allowed room for six artists and their work per 8 x 8 in. page. If you divide that by 1,000, you get 166 pages, 167 if you round up. If you estimate that all the other photomontages and essays will take up another 40 pages you now have a book that will be 200 pages long. Add to that, a Musical CD of performances and DVD of interviews and events that Carl wanted to add, you are looking at an extremely expensive book.

Aside from the production costs of the CD and DVD, The Steering committee was clear they wanted the book to have full color, high resolution images, printed on high gloss paper, which is one of the most expensive papers, and hardbound leather binding with two CD sleeves for the music CD and DVD. Paul, Rick and I shopped around different printing companies, first in the City X metropolitan area, then across the country and even in Canada and Europe. The absolute cheapest estimate we could find to print the book the way the SC wanted, was \$25,000 with a company in Canada. Any of the local places wanted to charge anywhere from \$30,000 to \$50,000 for that type of print job.

This project was becoming far more work then any of us had anticipated and Carl's whole idea about the compilation CD of all the music performances at the ATO 2004 show and a DVD of interviews of over 350 artists talking about the ATO experience was totally over the top.

One of the members of the Performing Arts committee had recorded most of the shows, and Gina and Liz had tapes of the interviews. The music had been recorded during live performance and the sound quality was very low. The tapes would take a lot of tweaking before becoming CD quality.

Gina and Liz were novice filmmakers and had recorded their interviews on an old camcorder using low-resolution VHS tapes, which made for poor picture and sound quality. They had hundreds of hours of footage they did not know how to edit and even if they did, they did not own or have access to any film editing equipment. Carl said he knew someone who could edit the film and another person who might be able to master the music. The idea of trying to make all this work by the end of May sounded ludicrous. Even if we could find someone to edit the videos and the music, with that amount of footage we had, it would take months.

Trying to Changing Directions

Since the original plan for the Yearbook was not working out well Paul, Rick, Jesse and I came up with a few other options for the Steering Committee to consider. Several Art Publications, Gallery owners and Museum curators from the City X area were invited by the Public Relations Committee to come to Artopia in 2004 and each choose ten artists they felt were exceptional. We had copies of over 100 artists and their work in the minuscule, disorganized archive the Steering Committee kept. We also had a number of photos from Artopia 2004 as well as photos of the three previous ATO shows, with the buildings, set ups and performances.

We suggested since we did not have sufficient information or time to make the yearbook we should create a book that would showcase Artopia. Instead of it being about Artopia 2004, it would be about Artopia in general, a brief retrospective or manifesto of sorts. I thought we could take the images we had and make a nice Art book about the history of Artopia, describing their goals and showing their growth as an organization. So people could see what they have accomplished thus far and what they hope to achieve in the future.

All of us on the Yearbook Committee completely agreed that this seemed like a much more realistic undertaking. We felt if we made the publication more of an art book that featured all four ATO shows it would be a better first publication. It would not be dated, so it could be sold to people who had participated in any of the Artopias thus far and at the Artopias in the future. It would be shorter than the yearbook so the overhead costs would be less. We could charge less for it but still keep the high quality printing. This idea seemed like it would have a better chance at reaching a more diverse audience, getting Artopia message out to the public, earning the organization positive attention and raising money for Artopia programs. It would be a beautiful book that showcased some of the best modern art and artists coming out of City X today.

Where as if we were to continue on the 2004 Yearbook, we would not realistically be able to complete it for at least six months. That would mean the book would be published almost a year after the event.

Because of the books size and printing expenses, we would have to sell the books for \$45 to \$50 to have any hope of breaking even, let alone earning any money. We felt it was highly unlikely that many people would buy the book that long after the event at such a high price.

We let the Steering Committee know we would still be interested in creating a Yearbook but it would make more sense if we did it for Artopia 2006. We could design the layout of the book now, then open a yearbook office at the 2006 show. We would have the artists submit a photo of themselves and a picture of one of their pieces of art at registration. We could require the photos to be a specific size, format and resolution, that way we would not have to waste time reformatting and photo shopping everyone's photos. If people were unable to provide photos, we could have yearbook volunteers to take pictures of them. Then during the month of the show we could document performances and other happenings and work on the book while the event went on. When the artists sign out at the end of the event we could have part of the book finished to show them and take orders, while the event was still fresh to them. We could even use the proceeds from the Artopia Retrospective book sales to help fund the Yearbook 2006 endeavor. This to us seemed like a more logical and realistic option.

Another conversation my friends and I had was that we could try to use the money that would be spent on the Yearbook towards something else that might increase Artopia's visibility. We could take the \$25,000 the Steering Committee wanted to spend on the Yearbook and instead invest it in a young architect to design a creative entryway into or around the 2006 ATO site. Have the artists construct some sort of other worldly environment people would have to travel through before entering the show. Perhaps that space could be used as an area for outdoor entertainment or a place where people could congregate.

PS1, which is an annex of Moma, the Modern Art Museum, in New York City, creates different environments like these each summer. They provide entertainment and refreshments and have drawn thousand of New Yorkers out of Manhattan to their location in Queens. It has become an extremely popular place to gather. They charge an entry fee that allows people the ability to go in and out of the museum as they like, while enjoying different live entertainment outside, providing both visual and performance art to the patrons. They have created beach environments with sand and pools for people to wade in and jungles with bamboo mazes and mist that sprays to keep everyone cool. This has attracted nation wide if not international attention in the Art world. People come from all over to experience these installations. It has been an extremely profitable venture for them allowing PS1 the ability to fund numerous other events.

Or we could use the money to hire a big name band one night that would draw a large crowd, perhaps getting different radio stations involved to promote the event. Or buy more paint and fix up the building better.

To me there were so many other ways we could spend that amount of money, this book that so few people would be able to see or buy, seemed like a waste of resources.

To our disbelief and confusion the Steering Committee refused to consider any of our ideas. They wanted the 2004 Yearbook, even if we didn't have the proper information necessary. They wanted this cheesy, unprofessional, kitschy crap, if I may be so bold to say. They thought our ideas were boring and that hiring architects or well known musicians as well as showcasing Artopia was too self indulgent and egocentric. The idea of featuring some of the top artist went against everything they stood for. If we were to do the book everyone must be included equally.

My friends and I wanted to make Artopia something people from around the country would see and appreciate. There are so many talented artists in City X; we felt it was time we got the respect we deserved. We live in one of the wealthiest cities in one of the wealthiest and influential countries in the world. There is no reason that we should not be able to compete with New York, LA, San Francisco and Chicago. We have just as many resources, if not more then those cities. This is a very wealthy, cultured area. If Artopia commanded more respect we could do so many things. I understood how the Steering Committee felt about not wanting Artopia to become a part of the "high art society" that can so often be snobby and cruel. I would not want to see Artopia become a place where the only people who would be able to show their work either had connects or were considered part of the upper echelon of established artists by the bourgeois. I think Artopia can include everyone and at the same time be a sophisticated, well-organized event.

One Last Attempt to Salvage What Was Left

So it was time to rework the master plan once again. Carl and the Steering Committee were still committed to the Yearbook idea although it seemed totally impossible. The Prom committee was getting restless. The designers were worried we were not going to be able to print the T-shirts, posters and stickers, so they felt they were spinning their wheels working on it without any specific plan of action. The SC came up with a compromise to pacify everyone. We would sell ad space for the Yearbook to pay for the T-shirt project. Then take the proceeds from Prom and the sale of the T-shirts, posters and stickers to pay for the Yearbook. This seemed like a good idea. It gave the Yearbook committee more time to work out what we wanted to do and allowed us to create and print our T-shirts, posters and stickers which seemed like a far more realistic undertaking then our difficulties with the yearbook.

The Prom committee decided it would be more efficient if we divided everyone up into different groups.

We would need one group to take care of the entertainment, another to organize the workshops, others in charge of the decorations, food and drinks and then of course advertisement and fundraising. There were plenty of volunteers for the first three groups but nobody wanted to work on fundraising. At some point I mentioned the fact that I had taken a course on writing grants and proposals in graduate school and we had learned a little about fundraising. Regrettably that meant I had the most knowledge on the subject and was elected head of fundraising, even though I had never done anything like that before. Lucky for me Paul, Rick and Ann volunteered to help.

The first thing we did was go through the phone book and make a list of all the businesses we thought might be interested in selling to the type of crowd an event like Artopia attracts. We gathered names of art galleries, art stores, art schools, framing shops, craft stores, boutiques, cafés, record stores anyone that might be interested.

The next issue we had to work out was how much would we sell the ad spaces for and what would the people get for their money. We thought about how other organizations run fundraisers, like PBS or NPR. That inspired us to created levels of sponsorship.

A Silver sponsor who gave \$400 would receive a 4 x 4.5 inch Ad designed by an Artopia artist with their business' name and information in the Yearbook. The business' name and information would also be featured on the Artopia website for one month. Their name and or logo would also appear on one of the posters sold at the Prom event as well as on the flyers for the Prom.

A Gold sponsor who gave \$800 would receive a half page ad designed by an Artopia artist with their business' name and information in the Yearbook. The business' name and information would also be featured on the Artopia website for six months. Their name and or logo would also appear on one of the silk-screened t-shirts and on one of the posters sold at the Prom event as well as on the flyers for the Prom.

A Platinum Sponsor who gave a \$1,000 or more would receive a full-page ad designed by an Artopia artist with their business' name and information in the Yearbook. The business' name and information would also be featured on the Artopia website for one year. Their name and/or logo would appear on one of the silk-screened t-shirts and on one of the posters sold at the Prom event. The business' name would be published in the local papers as a part of our advertisements for the Prom as well as on the flyers for the event.

We would also let the businesses know that not only would they be advertising to their target market, the money they gave for the ad would be considered a donation so they would be able to deduct it from their taxes as a charitable contribution.

The Straw that Broke the Camels Back

Once we had the sponsorship levels figured out, we had to get it approved by the Steering Committee. They liked our ideas but felt we needed to take a more formal approach towards fundraising. They advised us to write a proposal that would briefly outline the organization and our needs. They wanted something that could be used as both a mailer and a script for volunteers to go by when calling potential sponsors.

Again because of my graduate work, I was elected to write the script. In my writing I looked over what had been written before for Artopia fundraising events and I was sent a ton of information that the Steering Committee wanted me to include. I wanted to make something informative but brief. I did not realize what I wrote would need to meet the approval of not only the Steering Committee but The Board of Directors, Heads of the Fundraising, Event Planning, Performing Arts, Public Relations and Marketing and Education and Community Outreach Committees and pretty much any other committee Artopia had as well as a representative of the City X Commission on the Arts and Humanities. Evidently this fundraiser would be representing all of them so the Steering Committee felt they needed to be involved.

This made everything much more complicated. Each committee head contacted me a number of times, they all had different things they wanted to add and take out of the proposal. Each had their own agenda and ideas of what they wanted this document to be. I tried to take everyone's suggestions and concerns into consideration when writing. I sent draft after draft around until finally after a month and a half of working on something that was only a page long, everyone agreed. At that point we only had two months left until the last weekend in May when we plan to hold the prom.

Carl thought we should make a brochure that we could take to local business when soliciting donations. We were in a rush to finish this so we could begin advertising so Ann took my writing and made it into a brochure in one day and sent it to Carl. The writing in the brochure was exactly what I wrote and had approved by every single Artopia committee head on earth but the Steering Committee would not allow us to begin calling business until the brochure was approved. For whatever reason, that took another three weeks. With less than a month and a half until Prom, it was doubtful we would be able to raise enough funds for the T-shirt project, and even if we did, we wouldn't have enough time to have them all printed.

The Prom committee wasn't looking very good. Many of the members were not proving to be very reliable. As we tried to pin things down like bands that would play or dance troops that would perform, no one would commit to any specific arrangements. This really hurt the moral of the group and yet again, little by little people began dropping out.

Realizing we would not have enough money or time to print the T-shirts, posters and stickers, the entire T-shirt design group quit. We had all finished our designs weeks ago and were just waiting for the okay to start printing. Everyone was very upset and bitter about the whole experience. They felt jerked around by the Steering Committee who wasted weeks of their time at one meeting after another, waiting for approval only to have to scrap the whole project and all our designs at the last minute.

The same occurred everywhere else. We did not have enough artists to run the workshops, we didn't have enough performers to put on a show, there were no funds for decorations and even if there was, there were no volunteers to decorate. By the end we were back down to the original seven. Rick, Paul, Jesse, Ann, Carrel and myself and even we didn't know why we were there anymore. We had become so consumed with the Yearbook and Sponsorship letter that we lost track of what was happening with the Prom. We thought others were taking charge when in fact it was all falling apart.

That was the end. We spent months working on one project after another, only to see them all fall apart. We tried to do something good and in the end we accomplished nothing. We put our names on the line promoting Artopia with newspapers and businesses that were going to donate ad space and goods then we were never able to hold up our end of the bargain.

Chapter 5: What is going wrong with the organization and what could be done to fix it?

Introduction to Reframing

In this chapter I will explore the reasons why I felt the organization was unable to fulfill its goals or please its members and constituents. I will examine different issues the group faced, using Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal's book, *Reframing Organization, Artistry, Choice and Leadership, Third Edition* (2003) as a guide. I will divide the problems up by what frame I believe the issues may stem from and then using that same frames purpose what I would do if I was the leader of this organization, to settle conflict and help the members become more effective in reaching their goals, tasks and retaining volunteers.

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal describe a frame as a mental map or set of ideas or assumptions a person carries in their head. These frames help them understand and negotiate a particular "Territory" of life (pg. 12). Bolman and Deal believe that corporations and organizations have different mind-sets or frames they use in conducting business and interacting with employees or volunteers. They describe four different kinds of frames or mind-sets that corporation or organizations may follow.

The Human Resource Frame

The human resource frame is the first frame Bolman and Deal discuss. The human resource frame is based particularly on ideas from psychology and sees an organization much like an extended family, made up of individuals with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills and limitations. They believe people have great capacity to learn and often an even greater capacity to defend old attitudes and beliefs. From a human resources perspective, the key challenge is to tailor organizations to individuals – to find what people need to get the job done while feeling good about what they are doing. (pg.14)

A human resource framed organization depends on volunteers' commitment, motivation, participation and energy in order to conduct business or accomplish their goals. Artopia falls under this description, as it is almost totally dependent on the work of volunteers and committee members for their existence.

A human resource organization has gatherings to promote participation and informal occasions for involvement and sharing feelings. The ATO shows are designed especially for these reasons. The ATO shows occur to help artists interact and bring different people and organizations together. Unfortunately that openness and sharing does not carry over into the day-to-day work of volunteers and committee members.

Aromatic does not have informal occasions where all different committee members can get together and enjoy themselves.

All Artopia get togethers are meetings or planning periods that are always work related. Perhaps if the Steering Committee was to put together some sort of party or happy hour, where they provided free food and drinks to all the committee members and volunteers as a thank you for all their hard work, people would feel more appreciated. Individuals as well as groups would be able to meet and get to know one another better, strengthening communication and relationships within the organization.

Organizations that fall under the frame of human resource tend to work to develop a shared philosophy that values the feeling, thoughts and needs of the people in their community. Artopia does have a shared philosophy of its goals to bring artists together and bring communities together with the artist but there is a lack of communication between the Steering Committee and its members that leave members and volunteers feeling unappreciated, unheard, insignificant and disempowered.

Artopia needs to work on maintaining balance between human needs and production activities. Volunteers should not be thrown into work and not given sufficient instruction. When confused they should have clear leaders available to ask for help. The Steering Committee cannot continue to separate themselves from their members. They need to directly interact with their groups and give productive input during the production process, rather than saying nothing then asking for major changes to be made at the very end of production. There should be some sort of incentive to do well or reward offered for a job well done.

Within the ATO shows I would spend part of the proceeds from previous years on a few security guards. I would place them in visible areas inside and around the building to make the artists and patrons feel safer. I would put more lighting around the building and have guards available to walk artists to their cars if they have been working late at night or feel they would like their protection. I would also encourage other Artopia artists to make an effort to watch out for their fellow artists. Walk a friend to their car. If art is not supposed to leave the building until the end of the show and you see someone taking something, stop him or her, ask who he or she are or get a security guard to.

If parts of the building are old or in questionable condition, do not allow artists to put their work there. Mark the area off, so no one can go in. Make sure to put a lot of large, clear diagrams of fire exit routes around the building so people will know how to get out of the building in case of an emergency. Have all the fire alarms and electrical circuits checked and replaced if needed, before opening the building to artists. If you think there might be power concerns, if possible have a generator ready to back up the system so black outs do not interfere with performances and visitor experience of the show. It should be apparent to artists and visitor alike that the organization cares and is looking out for their safety.

I would address the community leaders and schools complaints about pornographic images throughout the show by having the committee members on the Education and Community Outreach Committee come up with some sort of standard based on their thoughts and feelings of what kinds of images qualify as inappropriate for children. I would not censor the event but I would ask artists with work of strong sexual or violent nature to put their work in a specific, fair area. I would then put a well mark sign out in front of the area that some of the artwork in this area many contain images not appropriate for younger audiences. That way school and community groups can come through the show, see all the work and not be offended by work they may feel is pornographic or inappropriate for the children.

The Structural Frame

The next frame Bolman and Deal discuss is the Structural Frame. The frame emphasizes goals, specialized roles, and formal relationships, divisions of labor, rules, policies, procedures and hierarchies to coordinate diverse activities and into a unified strategy. (pg.14) The structural frame I believe most people are familiar with depends on hierarchies of leadership for its resource management and success. The hierarchy is usually a pyramid type of distribution in power where a few on top have power over all, the next level has power over all those beneath them, so on and so fourth until the bottom, broadest part of the pyramid, those that have very little, if no power over the course their organization follows.

This Structural hierarchy exists within Artopia. The top of the pyramid are the representatives from The City X Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CITY XCAH) and the Board of Trustees who control the purse strings of the organization, providing the grants and funds to run programs and events. The next level is the Steering Committee, many if not all of the members of the SC are on the Board of Trustees, and they have power over all other committees. The next levels are the permanent committees such as the Performing Arts and Educational and community Outreach Committees. They have equal power amongst themselves but they hold power over their off shot committees that work on smaller projects such as the Promotional Committee I worked on that was under the supervision of the Public Relations and Marketing Committee. Then within each committee there is usually a head, although sometimes it is hard to tell whom that is and often more senior committee members take turns in that role. The committee members have power over the volunteers who are the bottom level of the pyramid.

A successful structural organization creates strategies to set objectives and coordinate resources. They transmit facts and information and offer economic incentives. There is a rational sequence to produce the right decisions. They realign roles and responsibilities to fit their tasks and environment and develop a way to distribute rewards or penalties to control performances.

They maintain order and the organizational goals by having authorities to resolve conflict and have formal occasions for making decisions

Artopia has weak integration of organizational goals, roles and responsibilities. There is no rational sequence to production. Projects are not always designed with a major goal in mind. There are too many small off shot committees work on so many different projects that the Steering Committee loses track of what each group is working on and why. The organization needs to establish what their main goals are then be specific as to who's responsible it will be to carry out those goals. Their needs to be an established chain of command in each committee and elected members of the committees whose job it is to inform the Steering Committee as well as all other committees what they are working on. This will prevent overlapping projects and provide the opportunity to combine resources when possible.

The organizations main method of communication through out the entire organization is e-mail that in itself is not a problem. The problem is that all the committees and their members are linked together. Some of the e-mails sent out may be directed towards everyone while others become very myopic centered around one individual's conversation with another. This causes members to become besieged by multiple e-mails each day about topics and issues that do not relate to their work or committee. Because there are so many e-mails flowing back and forth people stop paying attention to them and then important information can be overlooked. Therefore Artopia needs to separate each committee into different groupings on e-mail and then perhaps even divided the off shot committees as well in an attempt to make the system of transmitting information more precise, so the right people are getting the right information.

All meetings are very casual. There is no structure or order to proceedings, no firm due dates or pressure to complete work. This creates chaotic meetings with no leadership or direction, wasting time, confusing the issues and goals of the group as well as slowing productivity. Meetings need to be more organized. The leaders should clearly communicate their groups' overall goal or project, perhaps write it up on a poster for everyone to see, with the exact date it needs to be finished by. Then dissect that goal or project into smaller objectives. Have each objective be the topic of conversation or goal for each meeting. Mark off each objective or part of the project that has been completed until the group finally achieves the overall goal or finishes the project. The meeting's conversations could be kept on track by creating some sort of structure for people to talk, such as a talking stick to be passed around or speaking in turn by going around in a circle. I think that might improve the group's ability to communicate with one another and clear up confusion, making for a more effective group.

With issues at the ATO shows of volunteers not showing up to serve volunteer hours without an excuse. I would create some sort of penalty such as paying a fine or serving extra volunteer hours for first time offenders.

For more serious offenses such as missing multiple volunteer times, perhaps asking the artist to take down their work and have them leave the show early or not let them participate again. I would make these penalties known in the beginning at registration and the artists sign a promise to fulfill their required time.

The Political Frame

Bolman and Deal describe the political frame as being rooted in the work of political science. It sees organizations as arenas, contests, or jungles. Parochial interests compete for power and scarce resources. Conflict is rampant because of enduring differences in needs, perspectives, and lifestyles among competing individuals and groups. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are a normal part of everyday life. Coalitions form around specific interests and change as issues come go. Problems arise when power is concentrated in the wrong place or is so broadly dispersed that nothing gets done. (Pg.15)

A positive political organization will try to make sure both parties involved have a mutual understanding about rules of game. Are willing to make all pertinent information public and are willing to discuss such information openly. They should have a legitimate interest in the wellbeing of others.

Artopia is a very political organization, they rely on networking in order to get artist, volunteers and an audience. They are not able to spend much money on advertising for events so they depend heavily on word of mouth to gain an audience. The way we in the PR committee brought our friends in to work is how Artopia find most of its artists and volunteers.

As a participant in the ATO show, networking and coalitions are very important. If you are in the know or have access to privy information, you will be able to see they layout plans, choose a space a head of the other artists and be given more supplies. An example of this would be the middle school girl who reserved the entire front entrance of the show for her six small paintings. Coincidentally, her mother was on the Steering Committee. You will also have better odds of being interviewed or written up in art magazines or offered gallery space because the Steering Committee members bring writers, critiques and gallery owners on a guided tour of the show and if they like you, your area just might be on the tour route. If on a committee, you might be given more support and funding for projects.

The first issue I would work on would be the problems with allocation of space at the ATO show.

I would still use the method of allowing those artists who signed up and paid the entry fee select first but instead of a mad dash for space, I would have the Events and Program Management Committee volunteers go through the space before any artists were allowed in and mark off separate equal areas of space that multiple artists could display their work in. I would have them beginning with the first area closest to the entrance then section by section all the way up to the top floors and rooms. I would systematically fill the space. So the first artists that come to choose a space would be able to find a place in the first designated area say in the front of the building. The next group of artists would choose from the second designated area, so on and so fourth going in order, section by section. I would also make sure that in each area, spaces are separated for artists with both large work to choose from and space for artists with small work to choose from. The EPMC volunteers would be there to make sure an artist with smaller work did not take a space reserved for artists with larger work. This way the artists would still have choices about their spot but in a controlled environment.

As for the supplies, I do think the fairest way is first come first serve but I would warn artists that they should either hide their supplies or take them with them if they needed them again, otherwise they would be up for grabs for others to use. At least by explaining this everyone is on the same page.

I would keep the most visible areas open for Committee projects. Meaning I would make sure I had committees working on different displays such as the "Poster a Day Campaign" or a huge wall size print out of the map of the building, or a community mural project, in the lobby and entrance hallways. That way there would be a neat, clean, unified look that would hopefully make a good first impression on visitors.

As for the issue of Steering Committee members leading tours of writers, critics and gallery owners throw the event; I believe that is part of the political system and needs to happen. You want the writers, critiques and gallery owners to see the highlights of the show. If the show gets good reviews, more people will come to see it and that will increase the chances of everyone getting their work seen.

Within the committees there are enduring differences of opinion and jockeying for position such as when Carl came into the Prom Committee and took over as leader. There are coalitions that form to undermine others on a committee in order to attain their goals and interests over the interests of others and completion for scarce resources such as the arguments over art space and the stealing of supplies at ATO 2004.

My solution to that would be to set an agenda, get a strategy, network for good relationships, interview to find out where everyone stands and see what each person perceives as the problem. I would need to learn about who wants what. Then I would try to find common ground between fractions.

I would create a political map of allies, fence sitters, opponents and who are in positions of high power or influence and low power. Arrange individuals and groups in terms of their interest and power then use negotiating, bargaining, persuasion and incentives to win allies and initiate more explicit regulations to achieve a more just atmosphere.

The Symbolic Frame

Bolman and Deal describe the symbolic frame as drawing on social and cultural anthropology. A symbolic based organization treats their members or employees as a tribe. It abandons assumptions of rationality more prominent in other frames. It sees organizations as cultures, propelled more by rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths than by rules, policies, and managerial authority. Problems arise when actors blow their parts, symbols loose their meaning, or when ceremonies and rituals lose their potency. (pg.15)

The Steering Committee constantly used catch phrases such as bringing art to the children, spreading art education throw community activism, helping to revitalize the city or bring communities together. They say these things to try and give meaning to the work the volunteers and committee members are doing for the organization. When members start to loose enthusiasm or feel like they are just spinning their wheels and wasting time and money, the committee reminds them of the big picture, a more artistic and diverse City X. They are using a diversion, trying to hold on to members by creating a tribe like mentality.

There are very few rituals in the organization although I think there are many opportunities to create some. There could be an opening ceremony to the show such as the organizers saying a few words about the show and the work that went into it, then cutting a ribbon or bow tied across the doors to show that the exhibition had officially begun. They could have a large canvas that all the artists and volunteers could get together to sign and leave their mark, and then hang the canvas in the entrance of the show. Artists could donate work to be auctioned off along with the large canvas everyone signed at the end of the event at a large party Artopia could throw with performances, food and drinks. One of the organizers like the head of the Steering Committee could say a few words about his or her impression and feelings about this specific ATO show, have a cheers then maybe blow out a candle signifying then end of the event.

When organizations are new those involved do not have a common history to bring them together. Because everyone has a different history and might become attached to pocket areas where they find meaning, their needs to be something organization wide that brings people together and helps them to bond. Artopia has the big show every two years and that is a huge bonding experience, which bring a lot of people into the group with a shared memory of their time together in the show.

For those who have not been in an ATO show or did not have the same experience as others, that is not enough. I believe if Artopia was ever able to get the funds, they should buy or rent a headquarters, something like the Warehouse Café but all about Artopia. Each ATO show they could purchase of few artists work and maybe have the signed canvas display throw out the place. They could hold different functions and fundraisers, singles mixers, family parties where the adults could talk and kids could play. Let it be a meeting place where artist could convene and create or just hang out. If Artopia had a home I think that might help bring people together in a shared space, form memories and share experiences.

If Artopia was to hold one-day group events like a school beautification project where everyone could get together and go to a deserving school and plant flowers, or paint fences, do something that would remind people why they joined Artopia in the first place. Let people be able to make a difference, be a part of something larger then themselves, meet other artists, learn from others, create, be inspired, do something good, give back to the community all in one day. Instead of it being something committee members had to work on for months, let a few leaders deal with the logistics and just let anyone who wanted to show up that day participate. That would give people instant gratification and satisfaction of a job well done. More short projects like that where people can see the results of their actions first hand might help create loyalty in members so they stick around to do the more rigorous time consuming projects.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

I originally began with Artopia in the hopes of writing a paper about an inspirational inner city art organization bringing artists and their community together. Unfortunately after two years of working with the group I found the organization to be totally dysfunctional and almost completely ineffective. Many things were discussed, plans were made but nothing ever seemed to come to fruition because of miscommunication and rigidity within the organization.

Artopia is still alive and well today but my friends and I are no longer a part of it. I think Artopia is a wonderful organization despite its many flaws. I must admit it is extremely difficult to lead such a huge organization and keep it running smoothly. It is much easier to sit back and criticize. So let me be clear, although I have had my problems with Artopia, I truly respect the members of the Steering Committee and all the other people who make it run. I just feel they could improve some of their managerial practices and in so doing make the organization more effective in accomplishing their goals.

After all my group and I experienced working with the Steering Committee we felt we had no more to give. Our hopes and enthusiasm for the organization had been drained and we did not feel we would be able to affect the kind of change we hoped would occur.

That is when it hit us! We needed to stop feeling sorry for ourselves, blaming others for our problems and acting like we had been defeated. We didn't need Artopia to do the kind of community work we want to do. We are a capable, talented group of professionals. We had stuck together through thick and thin and were still standing as partners and friends. We decided to form our own art organization called Outlet and run it the way we saw fit. Without a massive bureaucracy to deal with, we have been able to come up with some wonderful projects and see them come to fruition in a short period of time. It is so rewarding to see your ideas realized.

I plan to take what I have learned from this experience and use it to my advantage. All four frames are necessary if an organization is to run smoothly. Just like a good recipe, too much of any spice can ruin the dish, it takes the right amount, at the right time, in the right place to make everything work together and taste good to all different people. Using Bolman and Deal's frames I have learned how to break down a conflict and investigate it through multiple frames of reference. I learned to try to separate the people from the problem. Multiple Realities produce confusion and conflict as individuals view the same event through their own lens. When you lead a group, you have to try to understand what others in the group might be feeling, try to see things from their point of view. Carl's actions and those of the Steering Committee were not intentionally negative or mean spirited. They were not trying to make us fail. They were unable to see things from our point of view.

That inability to connect with their members and volunteers were symptoms of a much deeper systemic problem within the organization. Without dealing with those deeper issues, blaming others would never change anything.

In my own leadership roles in life, as a teacher and in our new group Outlet, I will try to focus on the interests of all concerned. I will try to stay malleable and open to others' ideas. Try to remember people don't want to be told what to do. They want authorship, to put their signature on the place and make a contribution. I want to make sure I allow those who work with me, that sense of accomplishment. I want them to feel valued and appreciated. I will be organized, set priorities, create a plan of action and form an agenda anchored in basic values the group believes in. I will go day by day and take life one issue at a time.

There is one quote from "Reframing the Organization" I feel best sum up how I am feeling at this point in my life.

-He knows the road ahead is still long and difficult. There is no guarantee of success. But he feels far more confident and more energized than when he started. He is starting to dream things that never were and say, "why not?" (By Robert Kennedy, pg.430)

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